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SUBJECT: SPAIN COMMITS ADDITIONAL TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN

11. (SBU) Summary: Spain's Council of Ministers approved September 11 an additional contingent of 220 military personnel who will join the permanent contingent Spain has in Afghanistan, bringing the total to 998 military personnel. Minister of Defense Carme Chacon must now ask for Congressional authorization of the deployment. Though no date for her testimony has been set, MOD staff are clearing her calendar for the week of September 21, and approval of the deployment is expected. This cable offers a snapshot of present and promised Spanish commitments to Afghanistan and the current domestic political debate about Spain's mission. Opposition politicians who otherwise support Spanish participation in Afghanistan have been quick to remind the Spanish public that Zapatero said in December 2008 he would not authorize the participation of Spanish troops in offensive actions in Afghanistan, even if President-elect Obama asked for it. End Summary.

//Spanish Casualties and Numbers of Troops in Afghanistan//

12. (SBU) Spain, a major NATO ally, has suffered proportionately higher casualties than many other troop-contributing countries. Spain has lost 87 troops in Afghanistan since the beginning of the ISAF operation. Most of these casualties came in two aviation accidents, rather than offensive operations against the Taliban. Following is the information available to Post from media and Ministry of Defense sources about Spanish troops, pledges and commitments. See additional assistance provided by the GOS beginning at para 6.

- Permanent contingent: 778
  - 508 in Herat
  - 218 in Qala-i-Naw
  - 52 in Camp Stone instruction camp
- Electoral battalion: 450 (They will return to Spain when the elections, including subsequent rounds, are declared over.)
- Kabul Airport: 66 military personnel and four Civil Guards from October 2009 to May 2010
- Engineering Unit: 180 (They will return to Spain when the new Base of Qala-i-Naw is finished.)
- New Monitors: 12 military personnel and 30 Civil Guards for the training of the Afghan Army to be sent at the end of 2009. (NOTE: President Zapatero announced at the April 3-4 NATO Summit that 40 Civil Guards would be sent to training the Afghan Police. This deployment has not yet been approved by the Council of Ministers, but Guardia Civil representatives are discussing the matter with NATO authorities. END NOTE.)

13. (SBU) The Council of Ministers approved September 11 sending 220 more troops to Afghanistan. Post has learned that the troop increase, a maneuver group, would come out of the 450-man election support force in place now. Minister Chacon has portrayed the

Council's decision as the appropriate response to recommendations contained in a report presented by the Defense Chief of Staff General Rodriguez, who requested more troops to reinforce the security of Spanish troops already there. Minister Chacon will now have to ask the Congress for permission to send the troops, something that she will likely do in a special session of the Congressional Commission on Defense. The authorization will doubtless be granted, although minority parties such as the United Left (IU) and BNG will vote against it, asking the GOS for the withdrawal of all Spanish troops.

¶4. (SBU) Although most parties support increasing the number of troops and have been asking for some time for better training and equipment, they may use Chacon's appearance as an opportunity to accuse the Government of not telling the truth about the real nature of the mission. The Popular Party is already publicly and loudly demanding the President appear in Congress to admit that Spanish soldiers are participating in an actual war, where Spain is defending freedom, democracy and human rights, rather than in a peace-keeping operation as GOS officials have long asserted.

¶5. (SBU) President Zapatero is aware that Spanish public support for sending additional combat troops to Afghanistan is low (26 per cent according to Transatlantic Trends 2009). The President's decision to send additional troops, instead of increasing Spanish economic assistance in Afghanistan as 68 per cent of Spaniards would reportedly prefer (Transatlantic Trends 2009), will open him to criticism from some minority leftist parties. These smaller parties could accuse Zapatero of increasing the Spanish deployment just to please President Obama.

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//Economic Assistance Commitments/Pledges//

¶6. (U) Following is the information available to Post from media and Ministry sources about other Spanish assistance, pledges, and past commitments.

- Pledge of one billion dollars through 2016 to back the new Afghan government's eventual adopted development strategy. The aid would concentrate on management, education (especially women and girls), and development of Afghan economic infrastructure, especially communications and agriculture. (Source: August 13, 2009 - Zapatero's letter to President Obama) NOTE: Zapatero referenced a conversation between Bernardino Leon and NSA Jones. This promised aid has been portrayed as above and beyond existing Spanish commitments, pursuant to Afghan government programming, but it remains to be seen whether the GOS will apply current pledges to this total and how fast such aid is likely to be disbursed. End note.
- Four million euros to the Fiduciary Fund of the Afghan National Army (announced by Zapatero at the April 3-4, 2009, NATO Summit)
- Five million euros to the Afghan Electoral Fund (announced by Zapatero at the April 3-4, 2009 NATO Summit)
- Five million euros in 2009 to the UNDP to be allocated to the construction of a "Centro de Capacitacion Agricola y Desarrollo Rural" (announced by Soraya Rodriguez, Secretary for International Cooperation and Development on February 19)
- 1.5 million euros for Afghan elections (approved in the November 14, 2008, Council of Ministers)
- Eight million euros to fund colleges of agriculture in Kabul and in Badghis (announced by Moratinos at the June 2008 Paris Conference)
- One million euros in May 2008 to prevent a food crisis in Badghis, in response to a WFP appeal.
- 250,000 euros to the UNDP-managed Afghan Counter Narcotics Trust Fund given in 2007.

- 150 million euros, over five years, pledged at the January 2006 London Conference. By February 2009 the media report that Spain had already disbursed 112.7 million euros (49 million were managed by international organizations, 37.5 million by the AECID, and 6.2 million in de-centralized cooperation).

- 110 million euros from 2001 to 2005 in aid to Afghanistan, through both bilateral and multilateral contributions (commitment made at the Tokyo Conference)

17. (U) Other assistance:

- Training of the Afghan Police - In February 2009 Civil Guard Officers finished the training of 130 members of an Afghan Police Unit in the PRT in Qala-i-Naw.

- On July 28, 2008, the Spanish Ministry of Defense signed with its Afghan counterpart an agreement whereby Spain would build a Forward Support Base in Qala-i-Now, for ANA use at a cost of 14.5 million euros, as well as train, equip, and monitor a 150-strong ANA unit. Estimated total: 20 million euros.

- As of June 2008, Spain had committed 12 experts to the EU police training mission (EUPOL-Afghanistan), of which eleven were on the ground at that time.

- In October 2007, two Spanish Instruction Teams (52 trainers) left for Herat to train two units of the Afghan Army, under ISAF command. The mission, according to the media, was supposed to last at twelve months, with a cost of 200,000 euros a month, plus an initial cost of another 200,000 euros in infrastructure.

- According to then-Minister of Defense, Jos Antonio Alonso, the cost of the military deployment in Afghanistan from January 2002 to early 2007, was between 600 and 700 million euros.

18. (SBU) SUMMARY: Spain remains committed to Afghanistan. Though the 220-man plus-up is being presented as an operational requirement

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(and no doubt it is), there is also a political calculation here -- the GOS is sending a clear message of support to the U.S. There will be a price for this among Zapatero's socialist base and with the far left parties whose votes in Congress he needs. Nevertheless, the GOS appears determined to press ahead.

CHACON